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Conceding Defeat in Europe

President Carter late this week will be presented by his national security advisers with a new defense strategy that secretly concedes one-third of West Germany to a Soviet invasion rather than seek increased defense spending, which these advisers say would provoke Moscow and divide Washington.

PRM-10, the Carter administration's top-secret strategic study, suggested that this policy could be made palatable to Western Europe by simply not admitting its implications. This course was wholly adopted in high-level meetings July 28 and 29 by Zbigniew Brzezinski, the President's national security adviser. There was dissent from the senior officials assembled.

The strategic policy paper to be given the President (about three pages of single-spaced typing) makes no mention of surrender or duplicity in central Europe but talks of a commitment to a "minimum loss of territory" in NATO. To achieve a broader perspective Carter ought to look at the minutes of the July 28-29 meetings of his Senior Coordinating Council (SCC) on national security.

The SCC agreed on a 3 per cent annual increase in defense spending, fulfilling Carter's promise to his NATO allies earlier this year. But, according to verbatim notes taken by one of the participants, Brzezinski declared: "It is not possible in the current political environment to gain support in the United States for procurement of the conventional forces required to assure that NATO could maintain territorial integrity if deterrence fails. Therefore, we should adopt a 'stalemate' strategy. That is, a strategy of falling back and leaving the Soviets to face the political consequences of their aggression."

Brzezinski went on to declare that these "political consequences"—world opinion, U.N. disapproval, U.S. mobilization—would help deter a Soviet invasion. There was no dissent from those present, including Vice President Mondale, CIA Director Stansfield Turner, Chief Disarmament Negotiator Paul Warnke, Deputy Defense Secretary Charles Duncan and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. George Brown.

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Brzezinski continued: "We agree there must be a gap between our declared strategy and actual capability. We cannot for political reasons announce our strategy." Again, there was no dissent, though some officials voiced the opinion there would be hell to pay if the Germans learned what was happening.

All this follows the script of the June 20 draft of PRM-10, which lists four options for lower-range defense spending. Each would stop a Soviet offensive at a line formed by the Weser and Lech Rivers, surrendering about one-third of West Germany (including Saxony and most of Bavaria).

These four options, according to PRM-10, do not "plan" to stop a determined Warsaw Pact conventional attack. . . . If the Soviets persist in their attack, a U.S.-NATO conventional defeat in Central Europe is likely." Yet these options are certainly not rejected out of hand.

"Many of the adverse political implications" of the reduced defense options (such as independent German rearmament or, conversely, European accommodation to Moscow) "probably could be avoided if the U.S. continued to publicly support" present strategy. Adverse reactions by Western Europe "could be significantly softened . . . if the U.S. were to avoid any statements to the effect that a loss of NATO territory would be acceptable."

Arms Limitation Talks] or MBFR [Mutual Balanced Force Reductions]."

PRM-10 predicts any increase in defense spending would generate "divisive debate" and warns an across-the-board hike in defense capability "is likely to find little domestic support." In general, the options calling for decreased strength are seen as causing less trouble; in particular, the option calling for approximately the present military level but with less sustained power in Europe is described as "probably the most anodyne [option] in terms of its domestic impact, unless it were only described as a lowering of our sights."

These views were implicitly accepted last week by Brzezinski and the other senior officials. So the President is about to adopt a policy boiling down to this: Instead of seeking greater defense spending to defend central Europe, rely on political pressures to deter Moscow while secretly conceding a military defeat. Whether this reflects a "political environment" as claimed by Brzezinski, it certainly reveals the environment within the Carter administration.

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